

## SATISFACTION SURVEY

1. How your choices are met
2. Staff's responsiveness to you
3. How your need for privacy
4. Competency of staff

## TIPS FOR SUCCESS

# Conducting a customer satisfaction survey

*Find out what really matters most*

**1 DEFINE YOUR GOALS** Take time to clarify what you want to accomplish. What information do you plan to gain from your customers? What will you do with your survey results?

**2 DETERMINE WHO WILL LEAD THE CHARGE** Our experience has demonstrated that a key factor in the successful launch of a satisfaction survey effort is leadership. Leadership should be committed to hearing the voice of the customer. That commitment must be clear and visible throughout the organization. Discussions and decisions regarding who those leaders are and how they will communicate the vision and the value should be a priority focus.

Leadership should also be in support of the process. It is critical that someone within the organization be identified with primary responsibility for managing the process. This individual will play a key role in the success of the survey process so it is important to make this decision very carefully and with a clear understanding of the role they will play.

**3 COMMUNICATE** You can't overcommunicate at any stage in the survey process. This is another element of the process that should be carefully thought through before ever sending out a survey. The communication plan will encompass the entire survey process from beginning to end.

- Internal communication focuses on informing your staff about the upcoming survey.
- External (respondent) communication focuses on creating an awareness that a survey is about to be conducted.

Widely publicize the upcoming survey. Inform your staff; they play a big role in creating awareness. Take advantage of existing resources — newsletters, family and resident councils, bulletin boards and other opportunities for communication. Consider sending a letter to families alerting them to the process and letting them know how important their feedback is.

**4 DETERMINE HOW YOU WILL USE THE DATA** These decisions should be made before you begin the survey process. Administering the survey has only one objective — to understand the perceptions of your customers and to respond to those perceptions. The value you gain from the investment you are making will be driven by how effectively you use this feedback to drive action. This plan should be laid out very carefully and communicated very clearly. Determining this plan early on will facilitate timely response to the survey results when they are available.

**5 CONDUCT THE SURVEY** If a resident is able to respond to a paper survey, simple reminders to complete the survey may be all that is necessary. For residents whose ability to respond to a paper survey is limited, survey assistants may be used. Ensure confidentiality. Affirm that responses will be confidential and that honest feedback is appreciated and valued.

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**6 UNDERSTAND WHAT THE SURVEY RESULTS ARE TELLING YOU** The most essential part of the survey process is interpreting customers' voices and taking action based on what those voices are saying. With survey results in hand, begin to identify where to focus improvement activities. One way to focus efforts is to identify areas in which performance is lower than expected. Also, consider which areas influence global satisfaction measures such as "overall satisfaction" or "recommendation to others."

**7 DRILL DOWN FOR BETTER UNDERSTANDING** To understand the problem fully, gather more information. Go back to customers and ask for their input about what the survey results meant and how the organization can do better. This is a great topic for a family council or resident meeting. Once you have identified your highest priorities for improvement and have analyzed the root cause, you can begin to address opportunities for improvement.

**8 COMMUNICATE ... AGAIN** Remember, you can't overcommunicate at any stage in the survey process. If your customers take the time to complete a survey, it is important to report back to them what you heard. It is equally important for you to communicate what action you plan to take in response to the feedback. Failure to complete this very critical communication step could impact the level of interest in participating the next time you ask them for feedback. And of course, thank them for their participation. Communicating results, reporting on actions taken and expressing appreciation can contribute to higher levels of participation in future survey events.

**9 UNDERSTAND THE POWER OF NARRATIVE COMMENTS** My InnerView's survey instrument includes an opportunity for customers to provide additional information in the form of narrative comments. These open-ended questions represent an often-untapped treasure trove of information. When a customer responds with narrative comments, they are telling you what they *really* think. It is to your advantage to listen.

**10 SUSTAIN THE GAIN** Continuous quality improvement can be thought of as a *cycle*. This cycle began with the collection of customer satisfaction data, followed by more information gathering, root-cause analysis and process improvement. Make sure the improvement sticks. Find ways to evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions put in place. Were the desired results achieved? A great way to monitor this is to conduct ongoing satisfaction assessment of your residents and their families. As you do this, communicate back with your customers just prior to the next survey cycle. Remind them of what they told you the last time, what actions were taken and what progress you believe was made. Encourage them to respond when they receive the next survey in the mail.

Interested in learning more about satisfaction surveys?  
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